

Spying linked Carmichael to Chinese, Cuba

By Stephen G. Tompkins
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In early May 1967, Army Intelligence microphones hidden in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee offices in Atlanta recorded SNCC co-chairman Stokely Carmichael discussing an armed revolt by black Americans.

CARMICHAEL: We'd learn a lot from studying (Che) Guevara's tactics. But baby, we gotta have the guns and stuff to do the damage. The man don't understand till you aim at his head. (Argentine-born Guevara was Cuban strongman Fidel Castro's top lieutenant and wrote an influential book on guerrilla warfare.)

SNCC EMPLOYEE GEORGE WARE: Yeah, well, where you gonna get it?

CARMICHAEL: South, south of here.

On May 5, Carmichael distributed a secret report to SNCC members. Army Intelligence obtained a copy of the seven-page document, titled "Report from the Chairman." It said in part:

"Around the world and particularly in the Third World, we are looked to as the organization inside the United States who is ready to lay the foundation for a revolution. . . . We must then be prepared to wage a fight against this country inside the country."

Army Intelligence, already alarmed by growing militancy among anti-war and civil rights groups, saw the report and the taped conversation as evidence of Carmichael's willingness to turn to violence and possible foreign influence.

Later evidence would hurt not only Carmichael but Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as well. Army agents photographed and bugged King and Carmichael in meetings, and Carmichael often quoted King.

After King's famous anti-war

speech at New York's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967, Carmichael encouraged a black audience in St. Petersburg, Fla., on April 18 to support King's stance on Vietnam, "and when they ask you, tell them, 'Yeah, yeah, we agree with Dr. King. We not gonna fight your filthy wars for you anymore.'"

But the most damaging piece of secret information came from Mexican Army Intelligence.

Mexican agents uncovered in May 1967 a plot led by Javier Fuentes Gutierrez, head of the Mexican Communist Party, to establish a "socialist regime" within Mexico.

Gutierrez and his cohorts were financed by Hsinhua, the Chinese Communist Press Agency, which Mexican Intelligence discovered was a front for the Chinese Ministry of State Security, China's CIA.

Gutierrez's followers already had dynamited a Mexican Army truck and were seeking rifles and mortars from arms dealers.

But more important to U.S. Army Intelligence, the Mexicans revealed Gutierrez also was a top organizer of the Havana-based Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) — another group that received secret Chinese funding.

OLAS not only helped finance Gutierrez's activities but had set up a secret terrorist training camp in the jungles of Chiapas in southern Mexico.

Black Americans had been spied training at the camp.

On July 19, Mexican troops raided the Chiapas camp and snatched a large cache of automatic rifles, grenades and machineguns.

According to still classified Army Intelligence files, the AK-47 rifles eventually were traced from gunrunner Kenneth G. Burnstine of Miami to gun deal-

er Mitchell Livingston WerBell of Atlanta, a former OSS agent who ran his own paramilitary training camp on a 60-acre farm in Powder Springs, Ga.

WerBell supplied military weapons to anybody with the cash to pay for them. WerBell also had key contacts throughout the Caribbean.

Carmichael was photographed talking to one of those contacts — Marti Tellez — in the Havana Libre Hotel on July 27. Tellez, a former Haitian army captain, flew contraband for Burnstine's Miami-based Florida Atlantic Airlines.

A Cuban agent working for the CIA took the picture, and a report on the meeting was forwarded to Army Intelligence.

Carmichael was in Havana to attend meetings of the Organization of Latin American Solidarity.

"These (OLAS) are radical Communist revolutionaries who advocate militant and coordinated guerrilla warfare throughout the Americas," according to an analysis of the meeting based on CIA reports.

The analysis had been handed

to Maj. Gen. William P. Yarborough, Army assistant chief of staff for intelligence, at his regular Thursday meeting at CIA headquarters on Aug. 10.

On Aug. 2, five days after meeting with Tellez, Carmichael said he would lead an armed revolt against his homeland.

"We are organizing urban guerrillas in the United States according to the tactics inspired by Guevara of creating two or three more Vietnams to bring the collapse of capitalism and imperialism," Carmichael said.

Carmichael then threatened President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

"We are not waiting for them to kill us. We will kill first and we will settle the score," Carmichael said. "We must make vengeance against the leaders of the United States. We don't know if our people are ready yet, but our list is ready."

"We have no alternative but to use aggressive armed violence," Carmichael said.

On Oct. 10, Army Intelligence sent a report to Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson that Carmichael and his SNCC colleagues were calling for "Negroes to arm themselves in preparation for guerrilla warfare . . ."

"They seek to destroy the present American economic, political and social systems in a SNCC-defined attempt to gain freedom for the Negro."

In January 1968, as King was drumming up support for his planned march on Washington, Carmichael was in Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam. In February, he met with King in Washington. King was killed two months later in Memphis.

In March 1975, Burnstine was convicted by Florida authorities of masterminding a \$50 million-a-year cocaine drug smuggling operation in Latin America and Mexico.

A year later, his World War II-era airplane, a P51 Mustang, blew up while he was competing in an air show.

In 1974, WerBell was subpoenaed to testify before the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. The committee was looking into financier Robert Vesco's efforts to sell and manufacture automatic weapons in the Caribbean.

WerBell invoked the Fifth Amendment to every question asked by subcommittee investigator Philip R. Manuel.

WerBell died of a heart attack in 1983. Testimony in a Los Angeles courtroom later that year said WerBell had been poisoned.